

ABOUT THE NT ARTS ACCESS AWARDS:

The 2017 NT Arts Access Awards recognise the contributions of individuals, groups and organisations in the NT who have been working to improve accessibility in the creative arts for people with disability, across all genres of creative endeavor. The awards are a joint project of Arts Access Darwin and Incite Arts (Alice Springs) and have been running since 2009. The awards aim to acknowledge NT based artists with disability, arts workers, support worker, community groups and organisations who have made an outstanding contribution through their creative practice.

2017 MICHELE CASTAGNA MEMORIAL AWARD NAMING

In 2017 we have named the ***Michele Castagna Award for an Outstanding Individual Artist***, from 2017 onwards this category will be named in memory of Michele Castagna, 1944-2016. The naming of this memorial award will honour Michele's memory for years to come and memorialises Michele's outstanding contribution to Incite Arts (Alice Springs) in her role as Chairperson from 2007- 2014. Michele was a long term resident of Alice Springs with numerous professional and local memberships in Arts, Health, Disability & Multicultural sector committees and community organisations.

Along with Incite Arts, Michele was also instrumental in founding Arts Access Central Australia (AACA) in response to recommendations from the Mapping New Territory Project in 2003, with the aim to: "Develop an independent community organisation with an inclusive, holistic and cross-cultural membership; to progress opportunities for people with disability to explore creative arts and to promote broader community participation and integration."

Michele said: "It is my belief that the arts and all things artistic for people with disability is not well understood as to the benefits that can be gained from such programs. Lack of access to arts programs are very problematic where access and equity of participation to such programs is sadly unrepresented."

In 2014 Michele was awarded a Certificate of Recognition from Arts Access Australia (AAA), the peak arts and disability organisation in Australia, for her significant contribution to removing barriers to arts and cultural access, experienced by people with disability as audiences, artists, arts workers and/or arts leaders.

In 2015 Incite Arts acknowledged Michele's contribution to the development of arts and disability in Alice Springs with the presentation of a Life Membership to the organisation.

In 2016 Michele was awarded the NT Arts Access Award for Excellence in Inclusive Arts Practice.

Michele has left an enormous and unique creative legacy for our NT arts and disability community and we thank you Michele.

THE 2017 AWARD CATEGORIES & RECIPIENTS

In 2017 NT Arts Access Awards are being presented in the following 4 categories:

>>**The Michele Castagna Individual Artist Award** – Recognising an outstanding NT artist.

>>**Projects** – for projects which have demonstrated outstanding leadership in accessible and inclusive arts practice.

>>**Individual Arts Workers and Disability Support Workers** – recognizing individuals who have been instrumental in supporting the creative practices of artists with disability.

>>**Local Community Groups and Organisations** – recognising local community groups and organisations for their contributions to increasing accessibility in the arts.

ABOUT JUDGING (acknowledgements & thanks to the judge):

NT Arts Access Award recipients are judged on the following criteria: artistic merit and high-quality artistic outcomes; community engagement and long service and ongoing contributions to accessibility in the NT. This year's awards were judged by Meagan Shand the CEO of Arts Access Australia. Arts Access Australia is the national peak body for arts and disability, Arts Access Australia works to increase opportunities and access for people with disability as artists, arts-workers, participants and audiences. We would like to thank Meagan Shand for generously offering her time and expertise to judging this year's awards. **THIS YEAR'S AWARDS GO TO...**

THE INAUGURAL MICHELE CASTAGNA INDIVIDUAL ARTIST AWARD

WINNER: DANA DUNCAN

Dana was nominated by Maurice O'Riordan the director of the Northern Centre for Contemporary art for her work with the Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia (NT) and for her success in Art Mart 2017, where Dana's body of works on paper were a standout – on the basis of the strength of her work at Art Mart Dana has been offered her first solo exhibition at the Northern Centre for Contemporary Art in 2018. In her judging notes Meagan Shand of Arts Access Australia congratulated Dana on her success in a mainstream exhibition, for the high quality of her work and for her willingness to share her personal story of disability.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED: MARK CAVANAGH

Mark Cavanagh is commended on the artistic merit of his visual art practice; and for his long-term commitment to the arts. Mark is also recognised for his valuable contribution as a volunteer at the Free Space Studio, where Mark takes great care with packing up the studio and maintenance of the art materials. Mark is commended for his volunteering which he does because he enjoys helping others and contributing to the operation of the art studio.

HIGHLY COMMENDED: LIZZY TREW (ALICE SPRINGS – NOT ATTENDING)

Lizzie is a young indigenous performing artist from central Australia, we would like to congratulate Lizzie on the high artistic standard of her performance in *Unbroken Land* 2016, Lizzie was commended for singing in her language and bringing the Pitjantjatjara culture to life on stage. Lizzie is also commended as an outstanding emerging performing artist and for her creative vision which we anticipate will blossom into exciting future performances.

ARTS WORKER CATEGORY (this year all the recipients in this category are from Alice Springs so cannot attend the ceremony but we would like to publicly acknowledge their contribution)

WINNER: MIRIAM NICHOLLS (ALICE SPRINGS - NOT ATTENDING)

Miriam Nicholls has shown outstanding commitment to arts and disability since 2009 through her work with incite Arts and Acacia Hill School. Miriam has contributed to high quality productions including:

Close to Me (2012), *Somebody Everybody* (2013), directed by Kat Worth, former director of Restless Dance Theatre, the inaugural work of the 'stArts with D' Performance Ensemble (2013) and *UNBROKEN LAND* (2016).

Miriam is quoted as saying: "The highlight of the work is seeing how it brings out the best in each person. The role of a dance artist, in my mind, is to work with people, to question, play and ultimately draw out their strengths. I have seen parents and carers amazed and delighted at performances, as are the performers themselves, at what is achieved onstage and celebrated! Their joy is always infectious!"

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED: MELISSA KERL (ALICE SPRINGS - NOT ATTENDING)

Melissa Kerl is commended for long service to Arts and Disability in Alice Springs and for the positive impact her work has had on the dancers and performers she has worked alongside over the years. Melissa is also congratulated on the broad community reach that her work has achieved. Melissa is commended for her works with Incite Arts, Arts and Disability programs since 2012. In this time Melissa has undertaken professional development and training opportunities with guest and visiting artists specialising in inclusive dance and theatre practice. Melissa was involved with the inaugural work by the 'stArts with D' Performance Ensemble: "Somebody Everybody". And most recently Melissa has worked in collaboration with the 'stArts with D' artists to devise work for Incite Art's major production *UNBROKEN LAND* in 2015 & 2016

HIGHLY COMMENDED: VERONICA HAGAN (ALICE SPRINGS - NOT ATTENDING)

Veronica Hagan is commended for her work with Acacia Hill School leading the 'Carnival of Colour Exhibition' – which was held at the National Pioneer Women's Hall of Fame. Veronica led the project over a semester, delivering an arts program comprised of a diverse range of high quality craft and visual-arts activities including: candle making, paper making, card making, painting, drawing, collage and printmaking. Veronica also supported the students to participate as audiences by visiting local art galleries and viewing contemporary indigenous art.

GROUPS AND ORGANISATIONS CATEGORY

WINNER: ACACIA HILL SCHOOL (ALICE SPRINGS - NOT ATTENDING)

Acacia Hill School is being recognised for its focus on accessible and inclusive arts education for young people with disability, with a curriculum covering a wide range of artistic disciplines. Acacia Hill School is a specialised school for people with disability in Alice Springs; the students range in age from 3 and a ½ years to 20 years and come from a vast area reaching from the Barkly Region in the north to the Pitjantjatjara Homelands in the south. The curriculum area most loved by all the students at Acacia Hill School is The Arts, in all its forms. Over the years the students have participated whole-heartedly in dramatic performance, dance and music performances in different venues. These have ranged from class performances at school assembly, to school presentation concerts, and then community performances such as 'Close To Me', the 'Carnival of Colour', 'Alice Can Dance'. The senior students' have been involved with Incite Arts 'Starts With D' productions. The students' visual artwork has also been displayed in a number of different contexts, from the school newsletter, school displays, special events at Alice Springs organisations expos and open days, and the Alice Springs Show, where they have won annual prizes.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED: CEMENTSTARS THEATRE GROUP

The CemeNTstars is a Darwin based, inclusive disability-led theatre group for people with a disability, their friends, family and carers; currently comprising 12 members. CemeNTstars group formed in 2009 with the project *Afloat* and they have been running strong for 8 years. Among the highlights of the CemeNTstars works are numerous theatre productions including: *Afloat*, *Jules Heart Romeo*, *CemeNTstars Go Melodrama*, *Freezing Hot*, *Reading The Signs*, *Dream Baby Dream* (2016) and most recently for Youth Week 2017 with *Vizability*. The CemeNTstars are commended for their disability-led process and inclusive mixed-ability theatre methods, they are also commended for the community reach they achieved through public performance and their ongoing contribution to disability awareness which they have brought the community in Darwin over the last 8 years.

Projects WINNER: FREE SPACE STUDIO

The Free Space Studio is an inclusive and supportive visual arts studio project focused on the development of studio skills for artists with disability. Since 2013 The Free Space Studio has been housed at the Darwin Community Arts. The Free Space Studio is commended for leadership in disability arts in Darwin and for community development work, which has created sustainable positive change to the cultural landscape. The Free Space Studio has been successful in promoting the public recognition of the arts practices of visual artists with disabilities by providing studio space, skills development workshops and by facilitating exhibition opportunities and other professional practice outcomes. THE FREE SPACE STUDIO POP-UP IS ON IN THE CHAMBERS CRESCENT THEATRE – CHECK K IT OUT

